KPFA-FM, Berkeley Friday 6 June 1975

Noon news excerpt
(tape feed from Washington)

Robert Krulwich: Pacifica has learned that the Rockefeller Commission Report on the CIA will NOT include evidence of the CIA's involvement in assassination plots. The Commission, which completes its five-months investigation today, has discovered evidence linking the CIA to plots against Fidel Castro, but that evidence will not be part of the report. It will be kept secret and submitted to the President separately, so the public will not know what the Commission found. The decision to keep asaassination evidence secret was made, said a Commission spokesman, because the investigation kept leading to new material, and the commissioners realized "they could not possibly track them down all the way," so since the Commission was created principally to investigate charges of domestic spying, that will be the focus of the report, and the assassination question will now be left to Frank Church's Senate Investigating Committee.

The Commission's decision not to conduct a thorough inquiry into assassination plots and make report is causing great surprise here for three reasons. First, the Commission was supposed to complete its report last March, but got an extension from the President specifically to look into assassination charges. Second, Vice President Rockefeller, the Commission chairman, said on Monday this week that reporters would be "surprised and pleased" by the comprehensive nature of the material in the report, and he said no stones had been left unturned. He did NOT mention that assassination evidence would be missing, even though at the time he knew it would be. Third, the vice chairman of the Commission, C. Douglas Dillon, indicated on May 12 that the final report would include assassination evidence. Members of the Commission's staff are saying privately that this decision, to keep assassination evidence secret, is a bad mistake, because it will make the report look like a coverup. In Washington, for Pacifica Radio, this is Robert Krulwich reporting.

(end item)

6 P.M. news exceppt

Krulwich: Vice President Rockefeller handed in his Commission report on the CIA today, but no one will say when of if its contents will be made public. For weeks reporters in Washington were told that the 300-page report, the product of a five month investigation into CIA domestic spying and alleged assassination plots, would be given to the President, and then released almost immediately. Just yesterday the chief press officer at the Commission told Pacifica's Katherine Ferguson that the report would be available this afternoon. Then, strange things began to happen. Last night, the report suddenly got smaller. The Commission issued a press release announcing there was not enough time to thoroughly investigate the assassination charges, so the report would not include evidence of CIA involvement in political assassinations. Yes, there WAS such evidence, the spokesman said, but it would be given to the President separately, under a different cover, and would not be part of the official report that might be made public.

That announcement was greeted with astonishment, since just a few days ago Vice President Rockefeller announced the report was done and had left no stones unturned. At no time did he even hint that one of the main areas of investigation would be left out of the final report. This morning, reporters arrived at the White House, expecting to pick up a document that would at least review the domestic spying charges, but press secretary Ron Nessen announced that there were no copies for distribution.

(more)

... distribution.

The President, he said, would decide some time soon, after he's read it, if the report should be made public at all. What followed was an extremely colorful exchange between reporters and the press secretary, which ended with Mr. Nessen slamming his notebook shut and stalking out of the briefing room.

The reporters wanted to know if the President will eventually release the report. Nessen would not make any predictions. The report was ordered to restore public faith in the CIA, the reporter said. It was written for publication, according to people on the Commission, how come it's suddenly under wraps ? Nessen answered there had never been a guarantee the report would be made public, only a promise that the President would read it and then decide. And Nessen refused repeatedly to predict what the President would do. Asked about the Commission's sudden announcement that it hadn't time to thoroughly investigate assassinations, Nessen said reporters should go to the Commission and ask about it. The Commission officials then said that they were under orders to refer all questions back to the White House.

Did the Commission ask for more time to investigate assassinations ? Nessen answered, No. Did the President tell them to take more time ? No, Nessen said. In fact, Nessen said, the Commission is now officially disbanded.

The strangeness of these developments led some observers to conclude that President Ford has secretly rejected the Commission report, possibly to protect himself from political embarrassment. After Nelson Rockefeller's press conference on Monday, it was clear the Commission was going to be very kind to the CIA. We found, said Rockefeller, no major violations of the law. But two days after that, a likely Democratic presidential candidate, Sen. Frank Church, chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee, suggested that Rockefeller was conducting a whitewash. "We've seen the same evidence," he said, "and we think it's hard evidence that the CIA was involved in (as he put it) murder plots. I don't regard murder plots as minor matters," Church said.

Could it be that President Ford decided Rockefeller's report was too easy on the CIA, that Church would release his report in a month and make the Commission findings look like a coverup ? It's a theory that explains why the assassination material was suddenly deleted from the report last night, and why the President wants to see the rest of the document before it's released.

But it's just a theory, and one that Ron Nessen heatedly rejects. There was never any consideration given to any effect on the Church Committee or of the Church Committee, he said angrily. In Washington, for Pacifica Radio, this is Robert Krulwich reporting.

(end item)

---jdw/8june75---